

## THE GRAND OLE OPRY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this year the Grand Ole Opry celebrates 80 years of star-studded country entertainment. This venerated institution stands as one the most important traditions in radio broadcasting and country music. If not for the Grand Ole Opry, my hometown of Nashville would most likely have never gained that title of "Music City USA."

The Grand Ole Opry first broadcast on November 28, 1925. Originally called the WSM Barn Dance, the weekly radio show featured comedy and blue grass, gospel and country. Radio host George D. Hay made sure that every broadcast was kept "real down to Earth."

Today, the Opry stands as the longest running continuous weekly radio broadcast, with over 4,000 consecutive Saturday evening shows. Audiences can tune into the Grand Ole Opry via radio, satellite, television or Internet. The show is even broadcast by the Armed Forces Radio and Television Services Network to entertain our troops around the world.

Throughout its history, the Opry has embraced and celebrated the best in family entertainment, including those musical performances and comedy sketches that have warmed the hearts of millions throughout the South, all over the country and, indeed, throughout the world. Country great and Opry member Dolly Parton explains that at the Opry, "there's a circle of friends, and a circle of performers and a circle of love at the old place."

Jeanie Seely puts it this way:

The Grand Ole Opry is not an institution. It's not a building. It's the people, the performers, the people who come. That's the Grand Ole Opry. That's what makes it special.

And for new members, joining the Opry is joining a pantheon of country music greats. Roy Acuff, Chet Atkins, Johnny Cash, Dolly Parton, Minnie Pearl, Grandpa Jones, Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, and Reba McEntire, all have been members, and the list goes on. Even President Nixon has played on that Grand Ole Opry stage.

As Loretta Lynn recently told a newspaper:

If you've never played at the Grand Ole Opry, you haven't quite made it, yet.

The Opry has promoted country music in a unique way. It has promoted it to the entire world and has invited new generations to hear the best that country has to offer. I am honored to represent the home State of such a dynamic part of American culture and music history.

Today, I proudly introduce a Senate resolution commending the Grand Ole Opry for 80 years of music excellence.

## COMMENDING THE GRAND OLE OPRY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 286, which was submitted earlier today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 286) commending the Grand Ole Opry on the occasion of its 80th anniversary for its important role in the popularization of country music and for its 8 decades of musical and broadcast excellence.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 286) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

## S. RES. 286

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry is a pioneer of commercial radio in the United States, and is the longest running continuous radio program in the United States, having operated since November 28, 1925, and having broadcasted over 4,000 consecutive Saturday evening shows on WSM Radio, Nashville, Tennessee;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry played an integral role in the commercial development of the country music industry, and in establishing Nashville, Tennessee, as "Music City USA";

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry has consistently promoted the best in live entertainment and provided a distinctive forum for connecting country music fans to musicians so as to promote the popularity of this uniquely American genre;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry serves as a unique American icon that enshrines the rich musical history of country music, and preserves the tradition and character of the genre through commemorative performances and events;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry is committed to quality performances, and the membership of the Grand Ole Opry represents the elite of country music performers, including generations of America's most talented musicians, encompassing the music legends of old and the superstars of today that continue to define American country music;

Whereas performers at the Grand Ole Opry have included such universally recognized names as Roy Acuff, Chet Atkins, Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, Porter Wagoner, Little Jimmy Dickens, Connie Smith, Earl Scruggs, George Jones, Grandpa Jones, Loretta Lynn, Uncle Dave Macon, Dolly Parton, Minnie Pearl, Jim Reeves, Hank Williams, and many more;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry celebrates the diversity of country music, with membership spanning both generation and genre, representing the best in folk, country, bluegrass, gospel, and comedy performances;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry continues to utilize technological innovations to develop new avenues of connecting country music to its fans, and can be seen and heard around the world via television, radio, satellite radio, and the Internet;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry provides heartening support to members of the Armed Forces by participating in the Department of Defense's America Supports You Program, providing live performances to American Forces serving abroad via the American Forces Radio and Television Services network;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry is recognized as the world's premiere country music show, and continues to entertain millions of fans throughout the world, including United States Presidents and foreign dignitaries,

and serves as an emissary of American music and culture; and

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry will continue to impact American culture and music, and play an important role in presenting the best in country music to new generations of fans throughout the world, touching millions with music and comedy: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate commends the Grand Ole Opry on the occasion of its 80th anniversary for its important role in the popularization of country music, and for its 8 decades of musical and broadcast excellence.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I join the majority leader in the resolution that I have cosponsored honoring the Grand Ole Opry on its 80th birthday.

I ask unanimous consent to bring on the Senate floor this piece of demonstrative evidence which I hold in my hand and to which I will refer in a moment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Those of us of a certain age will recognize this straw hat with a garland of flowers and a price tag that says \$1.98 as the kind of hat that Minnie Pearl wore on the Grand Ole Opry on Friday and Saturday nights every year for about 40 years. Most of the time, Minnie Pearl was the Grand Ole Opry, along with Roy Acuff. She welcomed people with: Howdy, I'm so proud to be here. I didn't say it the way she would always say it. Thousands and thousands of Americans sat on the uncomfortable wooden pews in the back of the Ryman Auditorium and later at the Opry to watch this radio show. One of those was a young man from Minnesota named Garrison Keillor, who, in the 1970s, sat back there and imagined the show which we call today "The Prairie Home Companion."

A couple weekends ago, I was the guest announcer on the Grand Ole Opry. They didn't trust me with the Goo Goo candy bar commercial or with the 7 p.m. show which is nationally televised, so I was on at 8. But I did get to do the Martha White flour commercial and to introduce Porter Waggoner three times.

There is nothing quite like the Grand Ole Opry. There are 3,400 people out there every Friday night, every Saturday night, now sometimes on Tuesdays. Flashbulbs are popping. Everybody is having a good time.

There was Jimmy C. Newman from Louisiana who next year will be on the Grand Ole Opry for 50 years. There was Susan Haynes, the daughter of my law school roommate. This is her first year on the Grand Ole Opry. There was Carol Lee and Nora Lee, the back-up singers. They have been there a long time, too.